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Against Germany

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Biography

My name is Zdenka Grunbaum, born Bienenstock in 1930 in Osijek, Croatia. My father, Maks Bienenstock owned a sporting goods store, my mother Vilma Bienenstock (born Kohn) was a housewife. My sister Vera was seven years my senior. Before the war we lived on Prilaz Street # 11 and later on Roosevelt Street # 12. I attended Jewish Elementary school and started first grade of middle school.

In April 1941 Germany occupied Yugoslavia and established the fascist satellite “Independent State of Croatia”. Anti-Jewish laws and rules were passed, and I was forbidden to attend school. Like all adult Jews, my parents and sister were forced to wear a yellow band; my father’s store was confiscated, and the family had to move out of the center of the city. In May 1941 my parents arranged for me to be taken to the convent of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in the nearby town of Djakovo. There I spent the war years, hidden as a Bosnian orphan, till May 1945. My whole family was deported in 1942, and perished in Auschwitz. From 1945 till 1949 I caught up with my schooling in Osijek, and in 1949 emigrated to Israel. In Rishon LeZion I finished high school, and graduated from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem with a master’s degree in chemistry. In 1954 I got married to Branko Grunbaum, and in 1956 my first son Rami was born. From 1958 till 1961 I was in the USA, where my husband was professor of mathematics, and where my second son Daniel was born in 1960. My family returned to Israel in 1961, and in 1965, moved permanently to the USA and settled in Seattle. After certification in Nuclear Medicine Technology I worked as a research chemist, until my retirement in 1995.

A survivor's story from Croatia (Abstract)

by Zdenka Grunbaum (Bienenstock)

This account deals with my survival as a ten-year-old child under the regime of The Independent State of Croatia during the period between 1941-1945, sheltered in a Catholic Convent under an assumed identity.

I was born Zdenka Bienenstock in 1930 in Osijek, in former Yugoslavia.

My family consisted of my father Maks, mother Vilma and sister Vera, who was seven years my senior. My paternal grandmother Johana Bienenstock, my aunts and uncle lived close by and we interacted daily.

My father owned a sporting goods store; my mother was a housewife.

In April 1941 Germany defeated the Yugoslav army and created the Independent State of Croatia. Ustase and local Nazis came to power and proclaimed racial laws targeting Jews.

The laws denied Jews all civil liberties, including freedom of movement, owning property, attending schools or cultural events. Jews older than fourteen years had to wear yellow armbands with an imprinted Star of David.

As a Jew I was banned from attending school. My parents had me baptized and sent to the convent of The Sisters of the Holy Cross in Djakovo to hide. Mother Superior Amadeja Pavlovic sheltered me in spite of personal danger throughout the war (1941-1945) and supplied documents for me impersonating a Bosnian orphan.

My parents and whole family, all living in Osijek, were forcibly brought to camp Tenje near Osijek in May 1941, and on August 22nd 1941 deported to Auschwitz, where they all perished. I am the only member of my family to survive the Holocaust.

In 1949 I emigrated to Israel. I graduated from Hebrew University and in 1954 married Branko Grunbaum. I live in Seattle WA, USA with my sons and their families.

A survivor's story from Croatia

I was born in 1930 in Osijek, a town in former Yugoslavia. My maiden name was Zdenka Bienenstock. We lived on Prilaz Street, # 11, in a two-bedroom house between the railroad station and Zrinjevac Park. The house was small, but full of love and joy. My father Maks Bienenstock, mother Vilma, sister Vera and I shared the singlestory house with a nice back yard.

My grandparents on mother's side, Aron and Cecilija Kohn, their other daughter, Hilda, and her husband, Leo Poper, lived a few houses away on the same street. My father's mother, Johana Bienenstock, lived with my aunt, Berta Frank, adjacent to the park. The whole family was close, emotionally and geographically.

The years prior to World War II were very happy, but the childhood and the loving family life were too short.

My father's father, Samuel Bienenstock, born in 1867, died in 1929, during the peaceful years. He is buried in the Osijek graveyard on Cepinska Cesta and his grave marker miraculously escaped the long years of neglect and the war unscathed.

My grandparents Aron and Cecilija were killed in 1938 by two robbers. We moved to a downtown apartment above the bank on Kapucinska Street to put some distance from the grisly scene, while my father had a new house built with a friend, Mr. Mrljak, at Roosevelt # 12 (today Cesariceva #12).

I remember being a student at the Jewish Elementary School, while my sister, who was seven years older, was finishing the secondary business school. We shared a bedroom, as was the custom in those days, but unfortunately we were not very close due the large age difference.

The good and peaceful life was taken for granted by all of us and we hoped it would last forever.

My family was not very observant. We went to the synagogue during the holidays, but in everyday life we were assimilated into the general way of life. We felt comfortable with

all citizens, regardless of their religion or socioeconomic status. My parents were members of the Jewish Community Center. My mother was participating in WIZO activities; my sister went to camp with Jewish Youth to Crikvenica and I mostly associated with my classmates and friends from Hebrew Elementary School. I attended the Saturday services with my schoolmates.

We did not believe the tragic news that filtered from the European countries conquered by the Germans in the late thirties and naively thought that such atrocities cannot happen to us.

World War II had been raging in Europe since 1938, but it touched the former kingdom of Yugoslavia only in the spring of 1941. Yugoslavia entered the war on April 6th and capitulated under a German onslaught only a few days later.

My father was drafted into the Yugoslav army a few days before the capitulation and was stationed on the southern coast of the Adriatic, in Boka Kotorska. As the Germans overran the Yugoslav army in a matter of days, my father was soon captured and imprisoned as an officer prisoner of war, but he managed to flee the camp and come home to Osijek.

The German army entered the capital city, Zagreb on April 10, 1941, and the Independent State of Croatia was formed in collaboration with and under protection of Germany. On the 11th of April German troops marched into Osijek.

The Ustase, a fascist organization commanded by Ante Pavelic and aided by local German sympathizers, came to power. A very sad segment of Croatian history began.

That same month the Independent State of Croatia declared racial laws against all Jews. Somewhat less strict laws and persecutions were inflicted on Serbs and Roma living in the newly established state.

By the end of April 1941 all Jews 14 years and older had to register with the authorities. The next month confiscation of Jewish property began. All stores and offices owned by Jews had a non-

Jewish overseer appointed, with all property confiscated and owners forbidden to enter the premises. The overseer of my dad's sporting goods store in Kapucinska Street #22, was Mr. Milakovic, a long-time employee of my father's.

In July the Jewish families had to leave their homes in the city and in great haste move to the periphery of the town, into very small apartments.

The Jews were forbidden to enter parks or participate in any cultural or academic events. They were harassed and attacked in the streets, and many were incarcerated. Jewish students were banished from attending schools. As a Jew, I was humiliated in front of the whole public school population and ejected from the first grade of middle school. I lost the right to attend any school, which was a big blow and an ever-present incentive to finish my education.

Beginning in June 1941, Jews age 14 or older had to wear a yellow band with a black star of David while outside of the home; at most two Jews could associate in the street; and they could shop only during certain limited hours;

My family converted to Christianity in hope to escape deportation. I do not remember precisely when; I suspect that it was during the early months of 1941, just before the German invasion. The act of conversion did not convince the authorities, did not spare anybody or help prevent the coming catastrophe.

But it saved my life, though I was left alone in this world. I still feel a giant hole in my heart and it led abruptly to the end of my childhood.

In May of 1941 my parents sent me to the Catholic Convent of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Djakovo. The baptism itself must have been performed in secret - I do not remember it or being in any of the churches in Osijek. My parents succeeded in smuggling me out from Osijek under the radar due to my young age. I was not required to wear the Jewish yellow band or register with authorities.

Dr. Alfred Hoelender was a Jew from Germany who was ordained as a priest in 1940. He served in the Osijek and Djakovo Archdioceses and was instrumental in my conversion. He brought me to Djakovo to the convent. He survived the war serving as the confessor and teacher of mathematics in the convent, but left for Germany in 1945 to look for his family. No news was ever received from him after 1945.

I could not attend public school or the convent vocational school legally or use my real, Jewish-sounding family name. I was not supposed to exist. Mother Superior Amadeja Pavlovic (designated as “Righteous among the Nations,” September 2008 by Yad Vashem) obtained for me false documents describing me as a Bosnian orphan. I forgot the last name they gave me and the sisters did not keep a record of my schooling or existence due to the danger to those that sheltered a Jewish child.

The Mother Superior was the only one who knew my Jewish origin and real name, and she faithfully kept this secret in spite of the great danger to herself and the whole congregation. The sisters knew I was an orphan and called me by my first name, Zdenka.

During my absence from Osijek my family moved to a small apartment toward Retfala, but I do not remember the address. I visited this apartment only once for a short time, during winter vacation from school in Djakovo in 1941. I spent those few days in tears, as if I had a premonition that the coming parting would last forever. I do not remember seeing any of my extended family on this last occasion, only my mother and sister, and separately my father in the newly erected camp Tenje a few miles outside Osijek. The building of the camp just started and it is possible that he was engaged in forced labor at that site. I vaguely remember seeing him building bunk beds. This was the last time I saw any of them.

The boarding school building was opposite the main convent residence. We slept in a long dormitory, all 23 girls, with the nun Sister Huberta in charge. Each of us had a bed and a nightstand, and was separated by a curtain from the neighbor.

I had been expelled from the first grade of gymnasium in early 1941 as a Jew and got to the convent late in the school year (May) so the nuns placed me in the last grade of elementary school. I started the vocational school the following year in the fall. It was illegal for me to attend any school no certificate or report could be issued.

In Osijek, life changed drastically for the Jewish population in 1941. All adults had to participate in forced labor.

In July of that year the Osijek synagogue was burned to the ground.

After spring 1941 there was no possibility of flight for Jews. Travel documents from the Ustase were unavailable, and so was money. Some families succeeded in fleeing to the Dalmatian Coast (under Italian control) and a few others fled to Hungary, but for the general population of Jewish origin it was too late. They were trapped in place.

Camp Jasenovac was established in 1941 on the main rail line between Zagreb and Slavonski Brod, in a spot surrounded on three sides by rivers. This geographic position prevented the internees' escape and helped with their easy transport by rail to other camps, like Auschwitz. Jasenovac consisted of five separate but adjacent camps, one of which was Stara Gradiska.

The camp at Djakovo (established in December 1941) received at first women and children from Bosnia. The addition of internees from Stara Gradiska resulted in overcrowding, typhoid and other diseases. The Jewish Community in Osijek requested the Archdiocese in Djakovo to allot additional empty space to house the ill from the camp to prevent the spread of contamination, but was refused.

The level of cruelty in the Croatian camps compared with the worst known in Europe. The Jewish Communities in Osijek and Zagreb were required to supply the food for the camps in

Jasenovac and Djakovo. In spite of the best effort of the small remaining Jewish population, hunger and disease were rampant.

Vlado Grunbaum, (the father of my future husband, Branko Grunbaum) and other members of the Jewish community in Osijek were instrumental in helping and feeding the incarcerated in camps Djakovo and Jasenovac. As a Jew in a mixed marriage, Branko's father was spared deportation. Branko's maternal grandmother, Ema Banderier, was a French citizen and as such was able to give shelter and protection to Branko's parents, Branko, his paternal grandmother Flora and cousin Sasha (Jewish).

Vlado organized a group of young Jewish students who went into the camps with donations of food, clothing, and medicines and organized workshops to make winter clothing and shoes.

October 1941 was the start of a very severe winter, but the forced labor in the camps went on regardless of the inclement weather. In the early months, members of Jewish community managed to take out a few children from camp Djakovo. I remember my grandmother, Johana Bienenstock, sheltered and cared for a boy and a girl from Bosnia, taken from camp Djakovo. Unfortunately, they were all transported later with the rest of the Jewish population from Osijek.

The brave volunteers from the Jewish Community took their lives into their hands while delivering supplies, never knowing whether they will be able to leave the camps alive. In the early days they were able to pretend to take children to a doctor, but in reality they managed to send them away to safety. Branko's mother and father, Margareta and Vlado Grunbaum, were involved in some of these actions.

In Jerusalem, on June 12th, 1978, Vlado Grunbaum and his wife Margareta received a distinguished award for acting under great danger to themselves and their family during the WWII. They were acknowledged and their names were inscribed into the "The Golden Book of Keren Hakayemet."

Vlado Grunbaum was recognized and approached in Jerusalem and Kibbutz Nirim by adult women whom he carried as

children out of the camp Djakovo and helped send via Italy to Israel.

The terrible overcrowding, raging disease, and difficulty in supplying the Djakovo camp with provisions prompted the Ustase to transfer all incarcerated between May to July 1942 to Stara Gradiska (which was designated as a concentration camp for women) and Jasenovac. The Djakovo camp was then closed.

Many victims died there and the majority of them were buried in the Djakovo graveyard. The graveyard keeper in charge (not Jewish) secretly marked the names of the deceased and it is the only Shoa graveyard in Europe where concentration camp victims were buried with their graves marked with nameplates.

The Jewish population in Osijek was led to believe that the camp in Tenje (which was built from September 1941 on the road toward the village Tenje a few miles from Osijek) would serve as a permanent but isolated place for the Jews to work and live. Building of the barracks, planting crops and organizing minimum sanitation by Jews created a false hope for permanency and shelter for the duration of war.

Most men between 15 and 50 and unmarried women were required to help with the building of the camp Tenje. Women were required to do other manual work also; my mother and sister were washing windows in the local hospital and performing many other chores. During the early phase in 1941 they were allowed to return to their apartments after work.

While visiting my father at Tenje during winter vacation in 1941, I remember seeing wooden barracks full of beds, 2-3 layers high, and only men working. There might have been also some brick buildings.

But in early 1942 the builders of Tenje were required to accelerate the pace of preparing the camp. The Ustase took over the supervision of the camp from the Jewish Community and the

order was given to prepare for influx of more internees. Tenje's function has changed.

From May 1942 on, Tenje became a collection point, as a prelude to becoming a concentration camp. It was surrounded by barbed wire in July, and any traffic to and from was supervised by Ustase.

A few hundred Jews from Osijek were transferred to camp Tenje in the beginning of June 1942.

While in the early phase the Jewish Community and its representatives in the camp had a lot of input about the running of the compound, starting in July of 1942 the Ustase assumed total command. The barbed wire around the camp prevented flight and the initial transport of internees to Germany for forced labor began. Tenje became a central collection point for Jews from the nearby counties. Tenje also served as transit point for the early deportation to Auschwitz.

The middle of July 1942 spells the end of the Jewish community in Osijek, except for the pairs in mixed marriages. More than 2,000 Osijek Jews were collected in Anina and Jegerova School, marched to the railroad station and transferred by cattle cars to camp Tenje.

On August 22nd camp Tenje itself was liquidated. Cattle cars were loaded: The weak, very young and old internees were sent straight to Auschwitz for annihilation, while the able-bodied were sent to Jasenovac, Lobar Grad or other camps in Croatia, Germany or Poland for forced labor. The internees were locked in without food or water, overcrowded, without any sanitary facilities and without any knowledge where they were headed. They traveled for days in fear and anticipation of inevitable death.

Many were killed upon arrival to Jasenovac, the physically able and young were forced to build barriers against flooding rivers and perform other manual labor. Lack of food, exhaustion, lack of medical care, and daily exposure to elements and atrocities by the Ustase killed the rest.

I received a postcard from Stara Gradiska in early fall of 1942, signed with the first names of my mother and sister saying, "Doing well, Vilma and Vera." That was the last I heard from my family. I do not know how it got to the convent -- it was not sent by mail.

The wall in the Jasenovac memorial building contains, among other victims, the names of my mother and father. The beautiful memorial and a lone cattle car are the only reminder of the tragedy and of the thousand lives that perished there, suffering the worst atrocities and brutality, in the years between 1941-1945.

According to the records collected by the Jewish Community in Osijek, my family was taken in May 1942 and transported to Tenje. Upon the liquidation of Tenje on 22nd of August, they were transferred to Jasenovac and then Auschwitz, and killed in 1942.

No one of my family survived the concentration camps.

My father's mother, Johana Bienenstock, born 1870, was sent to Auschwitz.

My father, Maks Bienenstock, born 1896, was transported from Tenje to Jasenovac and died in Auschwitz in 1942.

My mother, Vilma Bienenstock, born Kohn in 1902, was sent to Jasenovac and died in Auschwitz in 1942.

Vera Bienenstock, my sister, born in 1923, daughter of Maks and Vilma Bienenstock, was also deported to Jasenovac or Stara Gradiska and died in Auschwitz in 1942.

Hilda and Leo Poper, my aunt and uncle on maternal side, were killed in Auschwitz in 1942 after spending time in Tenje.

Berta Frank, born Bienenstock in 1899, my father's sister, died in Auschwitz, while her husband Julijo Frank was deported to Gospic and later to Jasenovac.

Over 2,200 Jews from Osijek were deported to different concentration camps and only 10 survived.

My life in the convent was different from anything I had known before. I did not know anything about my family, and was equally ignorant about most of world events. But I did know the fact of the Nazi occupation, and the danger of being discovered.

I developed a deep faith in God. I was immersed into worship all around me and prayed very earnestly. It created a defensive shield so that daily events did not touch me; I was watching somebody else experiencing that life.

I do not know what I expected to come next, I simply did not think about it. It saved my sanity to some extent, even though it left deep wounds that never healed completely.

In the convent we dressed very modestly, with long dresses, dark stockings and long braids. There was a daily routine, which I followed without hesitation and did my best to do well. In the vocational school we studied mathematics, language, geography and history but also a lot of sewing and embroidering. After classes we did our homework in a large study hall. After dinner, we prayed and went to bed.

Sister Veljka Zirdum, my classmate (who was Ankica Zirdum before taking her vows in 1950) told me in 2007 some forgotten details about our life during those years. Neither she, nor anybody else except the Mother Superior, knew of my Jewish origin. She was very surprised in June 1949 when I came to thank Mother Superior Amadeja for saving my life and took leave from her and other sisters before emigration to Israel. Only on that occasion did Sister Veljka learn that I was Jewish.

According to Sister Veljka, during our stay in the convent, once when German soldiers came to the front door requesting admission, Sister Andjelka Thaler immediately called me from the study hall and took me into hiding. I stayed hidden until it was safe to return to the study hall.

Mother Superior Amadeja Pavlovic talked to me frequently, gave me small presents and encouraged me. Her discretion and courage saved my life. She and the convent did not receive any compensation for my schooling or keep. There was nobody around to compensate them.

In the summers most girls went home. The rest of the “boarders” who remained were from the occupied territories except

for me, who was without a home. We who stayed went to the farm Josipovac, a short distance from Djakovo. Josipovac was the breadbasket of the convent, providing also a supply of fruits and vegetables.

At Josipovac, the rules were relaxed. It was the summer vacation from school, but we worked in the fields gathering the crops, performing other light chores or tending the small animals. We felt free of the strict discipline and enjoyed the outdoors in spite of the summer heat.

One Christmas vacation I was invited to a nearby village to spend the holidays with a schoolmate's family. We went by horse-pulled cart and had to pass a checkpoint manned by soldiers. I had a piece of paper with a false last name and was so scared, that I really looked and felt ill. The soldiers did only a very superficial check and let us go, feeling sorry for the poor young and sick girl.

During 1944 the convent was occupied by the German army and was turned into a hospital for the many German soldiers wounded in fighting with the partisans. The boarding school was closed and the few remaining girls were moved to other parts of the convent. The convent yard had a huge pit, filled with debris and body parts from the hospital.

One SS soldier, a local German sympathizer from Osijek, was stationed in the convent in 1944. He used to observe me very carefully and frequently. I knew him well from before the war; my father and I went to his delicatessen adjacent to my father's store to buy his delicious sandwiches. I will never know whether he recognized me or not.

When Josipovac became inaccessible from Djakovo due to the raging battles in the countryside, I was taken by one of the sisters to Vukovar Hospital to spend the summer of 1944. Going to Vukovar Hospital felt much safer. On that bus trip we passed close to our former house and I saw a giant SS flag standing in front of it. The sister that escorted me did not see my deep sorrow at that time. She did not know my history.

By this time there was frequent shooting around Djakovo. The partisans and the Germans were locked in fierce battle and the church tower served as an observation point for the Germans. The American bombers used Djakovo as an orientation point for other destinations, but we did not sustain any direct bombing from the air. The illuminated flares that the planes used for orientation looked like beautiful, small Christmas trees, but were not harmless.

The bombing targets were Vinkovci and Slavonski Brod, the major rail interchanges for transport of German troops and supplies, and further points in Germany and Hungary. But sometimes the planes had to empty their load of ammunition on their way, so places like Osijek got hit. Some fell on Zrinjevac in Osijek, leaving a huge crater. They also used to strafe people working in the fields. You could hear the rumble and see the fires from far away. Shells from the partisans and Russian forces pounded Osijek from across the river Drava. Residents tried to avoid being in the streets and scurried from doorway to doorway.

During the first few days of May 1945 General Tito's Army overran the Independent State of Croatia, and most of the Ustase and local Nazis escaped via Austria to exile in other countries. The boarding school in the convent was closed permanently and all the girls had to leave.

Partisans liberated Jasenovac in May 1945.

My mother's friend from before the war, Olga Mrljak, took me to Osijek and became my guardian. My parents might have left her my name, but we had no contact during the war. I was hoping to see my family. As people filtered back to Osijek after May 1945 they brought back stories of survivors and those that perished and where they were last seen. The Jewish Community assembled a list of victims and unfortunately my family was gone.

Olga Mrljak lived on Vukovarska Cesta, and worked in a bank. She was successful in May of 1945 in getting my father's

house on my behalf from the government, as well as the two houses that belonged to my other relatives. That meant I had money for my support. My only interest and ambition were my schooling. I felt it my duty to my family to finish school in spite of all obstacles.

In 1947 I got permission from the state to occupy my former bedroom in my house. The communist official Rakos occupied the rest of the house. I was able to share the bathroom. It was heart-breaking living there and I felt very lonely. From the age of sixteen I was totally independent and without supervision. I am not sure where I ate, I do not remember ever having breakfast.

Lea Zentner was my schoolmate and friend in fifth grade. The Zentner family (she, her sister Vera and her parents) unofficially adopted me, fed me most meals and made sure I had clothes. The money was coming from the houses my family used to own, with Olga Mrljak in charge of it.

In 1945 the convent issued a statement that I attended and successfully completed the vocational grades 1-4, but I did not receive any yearly documents due to the war.

The fact that I was attending school illegally during the war allowed me to attend accelerated classes in 1945 and 1946 (specially organized classes for war victims allowing us to finish two years of material in single school year) and catch up with my contemporaries.

In the fall of 1946 I started regular school as a fifth grade student of middle school.

My effort at education gave me a lot of satisfaction and kept me on the straight path. The worries of survival and everyday life were on my shoulders. The choices and decisions were mine.

In the summer of 1946, students were encouraged to work for the renewal of the country. I helped rebuild the village Vrhovci. It was hard work, not much was accomplished during the 2 weeks, but we felt very proud of ourselves. The dormitory-style quarters were not comfortable, but at that age it hardly mattered.

Lea Zentner, her parents, Branko (my future husband) and his father helped me integrate back into the Jewish life.

In 1947 I spend three weeks near Sarajevo, at a camp for Jewish youth victims of war.

Branko was a year ahead in high school, attending the boys' gymnasium, and he started as a freshmen at the University of Zagreb in fall of 1948.

The political atmosphere in Yugoslavia became more demanding and oppressive. At the high-school level, the school committee expelled all students of German origin amid derogatory yells and threats. It reminded me of the time when I was expelled from school in 1941 as a Jew.

At the University in Zagreb, students who didn't participate in political activities were expelled without the right to re-enroll at any university in the whole country, even if they had excellent grades. Branko was not politically active at all, he was interested only in science. He felt threatened and urged his family and me to immigrate to Israel.

The first emigration of Jews from Yugoslavia to Israel occurred late December 1948. Only Jews were allowed to leave.

We joined the second aliya in July 1949.

The Yugoslav authorities required that we surrender our identification cards, renounce our citizenship, and abandon without compensation all property, such as my house. They had our crates inspected to prevent export of valuables from the country. The few items of my mother's jewelry that Ms. Mrljak saved I sewed into the seams of my coat.

I was 18 years old and did not need my former guardian's permission to leave. I finished seven out of eight grades of high school in Yugoslavia. I did not have a high school certificate, did not speak Hebrew or read the Hebrew script. I could not take any money, nor did I have any idea how to survive. I was not strong enough for manual labor, and I had no marketable skills.

But I found Branko, the love of my life, and I was following him to Israel.

Branko and I enjoyed our relationship, which was as between a brother and a stepsister or between best friends. There was no understanding about future marriage and no encouragement in that direction by his family.

We left Osijek by train to Rijeka and boarded the ship "Radnik II." I do not remember very much about the trip. We arrived to the port of Haifa July 25th 1949.

I joined the Grunbaum family semi-formally and was allowed to share a tent.

At first we were housed in the camp Atlit, where we were registered and received the immigration papers. We were assigned to tents, given a bed and a mattress and were allowed to get three meals a day from a communal kitchen. The showers were also communal, (cold water only) as well as toilets.

Branko, his parents, grandma Flora, his aunt Brod, Robert his cousin, and I shared an eight-person tent. It was situated on a sand dune; mice and rats were running around; and many inhabitants came down with intestinal problems. It was very hard on adults, less so on us youngsters.

After three weeks we were transferred to Herzlija, near Nataniya. The camp was near the seashore so we could bathe. The housing was better. We had small houses made of cloth. Branko and Robert picked figs to earn some change. I was shelling almonds and was paid by weight of the shelled product.

While roaming around we found planks, and Branko and Robert fashioned a low table and a bench so we could sit. We lived like nomads and we three -- Robert, Branko and I -- actually had fun. The adults worried about how to make a living, since we were without money, did not know the language and didn't understand the totally different circumstances and climate.

After about six weeks in Herzliya, we received two adjoining units of shikunim a few miles outside of Rishon LeZion. These units were built of concrete, with a roof made of corrugated plastic, and located in a former orange grove among the sand dunes. The

lizards, garden snakes and scorpions could freely enter between the roof and the building, and that was pretty scary at first. Branko and his parents shared one unit and Grandmother Flora and I the second. The units were adjoining, but not connected inside. Each unit was a single room with a corner fitted for a kerosene stove for cooking and cold-water sink. The bathroom with the cold water shower was outside and adjacent. The unit did not have any heating, no electricity and there were no roads, except one in the center of the neighborhood for the bus to town.

Our arrival to Israel occurred in 1949 before many services for the new immigrants (Olim Hadashim) were organized. There were no ulpanim (language school for newcomers) or financial help. Branko was working in Tel-Aviv repairing combs for weaving equipment to earn money, and during the noon break had private Hebrew lessons. His teacher did not know a lot of colloquial language, but was an excellent presenter of the logical features of the grammar.

Branko's father managed to enroll me in a high school on scholarship. The high school was more expensive than the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and it was also unheard-of that a new immigrant enrolled in high school. I had to repeat seventh grade, since I did not know Hebrew.

By the end of the school year I could understand the spoken Hebrew, but the language of the Bible required some complicated mental gymnastics with a series of dictionaries: from Croatian to German, to English, to Hebrew and the biblical dictionary. Using three to four dictionaries to get the meaning of the text was hard work and time-consuming. I was promoted to the eighth and final grade of high school conditionally, provided I make up for my deficiencies and catch up to the level of my classmates over the summer vacation.

My math, science and English grades were very high, so they let me start eighth grade. I passed the grammar exam with flying colors and at the end of the school year I was allowed to take the matriculation test.

I have never worked so hard in my life. My day started at five in the morning, studying by light of a kerosene lamp. I had to reach school at the other end of town by eight, had classes until three PM and studied again until eleven at night at home. For the bible test I managed to get a passing grade. In Hebrew composition, I passed only conditionally and had to repeat the test during the summer. I had to sell one of my mother's rings to fund my private lessons to master writing a Hebrew composition.

But I passed the minimum requirement for graduation as well as the entrance examination for the Chemistry Department at Hebrew University in Jerusalem for school year 1951-1952.

During the summers I had a job in a hospital laboratory in Beer Yaakov near Rishon LeZion for two consecutive years. Urine analysis was not my life's dream but I earned money to contribute to the household and I was very proud of myself.

Branko enrolled at Hebrew University in the Department of Mathematics in 1950 to continue his studies which he started in Zagreb.. With his talent, determination and recently acquired skills in Hebrew, he became well respected by his professors and progressed steadily in his field. He also worked in the Actuary Institute of Israel part-time to earn money.

Acclimatization of the rest of the family was much harder. The lack of knowledge of the Hebrew language hampered their daily contact with the locals. Fortunately, many people were of German origin and some understanding developed.

Branko's father became the administrator of a garage co-op that included some of our neighbors from Osijek and surrounding towns. All worked very hard. Branko's mother raised chickens and vegetables and tried to keep up the high standards that her family was used to. Grandmother Flora helped her with household chores. I kept busy with my studies most of the time.

Those were very hard year for everybody. I frequently walked to school to save the bus fare. I tuned out everybody and everything except Branko and my studies.

I started my studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem at Department of Chemistry. Luckily I was able to live at the WIZO House in Talpilot as one of about eight new immigrant students.

Branko earned his Master of Science in Mathematics in 1953 and started his PhD thesis.

We married in 1954. Branko served as a lieutenant in the Israeli Air Force from 1954-1956. After earning his PhD in 1957 he became a professor of Mathematics at Hebrew University.

I earned a Master's of Science degree in Chemistry from Hebrew University in Jerusalem and worked as a chemist for the Israeli Armed Forces in Tel-Aviv as a civilian until our son Rami was born in 1956.

In 1960 our second son Daniel was born during our stay in Seattle. We settled permanently in Seattle in 1967 and enjoyed our growing family.

We welcomed Galya and Martha, our wonderful daughters in law, into our family and are delighted with grandchildren Mara, Sasha, Maks and Sam.

The terrible journey that started in my early years ended with great joy later.